

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
PRESCRIBED GRAZING
(ACRE)
CODE 528A

DEFINITION

The controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing or browsing animals, managed with the intent to achieve a specified objective.

PURPOSES

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- . Improve or maintain the health and vigor of selected plant(s) and to maintain a stable and desired plant community.
- . Provide or maintain food, cover and shelter for animals of concern.
- . Improve or maintain animal health and productivity.
- . Maintain or improve water quality and quantity.
- . Reduce accelerated soil erosion and maintain or improve soil condition for sustainability of the resource.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied on all lands where grazing and/or browsing animals are managed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable For All the Purposes Stated Above.

Removal of herbage will be in accordance with production limitations, plant sensitivities and management goals using Sections I & II of the FOTG and other references as guidance.

Frequency of defoliations and season of grazing will be based on the rate and physiological conditions of plant growth.

Duration and intensity of grazing will be based on desired plant health and expected productivity of key forage species to meet management unit objectives.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Maintain enough vegetative cover to prevent accelerated soil erosion due to wind and water.

Application of this practice will manipulate the intensity, frequency, duration, and season of grazing to:

- . Insure optimum water infiltration,
- . Maintain or improve riparian and upland area vegetation,
- . Protect streambanks from erosion,
- . Manage for deposition of fecal material way from water bodies, and
- . Promote ecological and economical stable plant communities on both upland and bottom land sites which meet landowner objectives.

Additional Criteria For Improved Animal Health and Productivity.

Movement of animals will be in a manner to improve and/or maintain animal health and performance, and to reduce or prevent spread of disease, parasites, and contact with harmful insects.

Grazing should be applied in accordance with forage quality and quantity criteria that best meets the production requirements for the kind and/or class of animal.

Additional Criteria for Water Quality.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing in or near surface waters will be applied in such a manner that the impacts to vegetative and water quality will be positive.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing will be applied to enhance nutrient cycling by better manure distribution and increased rate of decomposition.

Additional Criteria for Soil Erosion and Condition.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing shall be managed to minimize soil compaction or other detrimental effects.

Duration, intensity, frequency, and season of grazing shall be applied to sustain vegetative cover to minimize soil erosion.

CONSIDERATIONS

Supplemental feed may be necessary to meet the desired nutritional levels for animals of concern. Placement of supplemental feed should be considered to reduce negative impacts to soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.

Use of natural or artificial shelter will be included as part of this practice when conditions demand.

Animal husbandry requirements which may affect the design of the grazing prescription will be considered.

Prescribed Grazing should consider the needs of other enterprises utilizing the same land, such as wildlife and recreational uses.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

A Prescribed Grazing schedule will be prepared for all fields and pastures incorporating any additional feed supplementation for the operating unit or portion of an operating unit being addressed. Grazing schedules will be recorded in a manner that is readily understood and useable by the decision maker in their daily operations. The manner of documentation will depend upon the size and complexity of the operating unit and the details required for a grazing prescription.

A Prescribed Grazing schedule will include the following information:

1. Documentation of the expected forage quantity and quality for each management unit(s), i.e., pastures during the grazing season.
2. Documentation of the number of domestic livestock by kinds and class, and the number of grazing/browsing wildlife of concern anticipated within the management unit(s).
3. Documentation of nutritional surpluses and deficiencies from the forage resources for each kind and class of livestock and grazing/browsing wildlife of concern in the management unit(s).
4. Supplemental feed requirements needs to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of livestock and grazing/browsing wildlife of concern in the management unit(s).
5. Development of a planned grazing scheduled for livestock which identifies periods of grazing, resting, and other treatment activities for each management unit(s).
6. A contingency plan that details potential problems, i.e., drought, and a guide for adjusting the grazing prescription to insure resource management and economic feasibility without resource degradation will be developed.

OPERATION:

The manager will apply Prescribed Grazing on a continuing basis, making adjustments as needed to insure that the concept and objectives of its application are met.

MAINTENANCE:

The Prescribed Grazing schedule will specify when evaluations of the current feed and forage supply should be made. If an imbalance is determined the prescription should be adjusted accordingly or other harvesting techniques applied.